



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

February 14, 2013 Public Hearing on Proposed Bill 5911: *An act concerning the Teaching of Gifted and Talented Children*

Testimony by Becky Hamman, Ed.D.
Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG)

Co-Chairs and members of the committee, on behalf of the Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG), we would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Bill 5911, An Act Concerning the Teaching of Gifted and Talented Children. My name is Becky Hamman and I am a CAG Board member. Our organization is composed of educators, parents, administrators, and psychologists: in effect, all stakeholders involved in this discussion. I am here on behalf of our members to speak in support of the Proposed Bill 5911, which, although on the surface addresses itself to the needs of high ability children, may have the power to improve educational outcomes for ALL Connecticut's students.

The Proposed Bill 5911 would require institutions of higher education to encourage students in teacher preparation programs to specialize in the teaching of gifted and talented children. Gifted and Talented methodologies and pedagogy, intensely focused on children's strengths, innate curiosity, and interests, is appropriate and has been proven to greatly benefit children at all instruction levels. It also has been shown to act as an effective tool in improving academic achievement of children of racial and cultural minorities as well as children across all socio-economic strata, including children of poverty. By providing more teachers with this time-and evidence-proven instruction of success, we can ensure that the Education Reform Law approved by you last year can be implemented with even greater effectiveness.

Research overwhelmingly indicates that GREAT teachers have substantial impact on student achievement while in school, with that impact showing economically measurable outcomes once that student joins the workforce and becomes a contributor to society. Pedagogies and best teaching practices developed over the last hundred years by Gifted and Talented education experts are today's 21st century skills. The more teachers are trained in these pedagogies, the more GREAT teachers will work with our children in Connecticut schools.

As one of only a handful of states that does not mandate appropriate service for identified high ability children, Connecticut does not require that these children be taught by specially trained teachers. Our organization receives daily calls and e-mails from frustrated and often desperate parents who are unable to find a school equipped to teach their gifted child, a tragedy for a family and a wasted opportunity for our brain-drained-challenged state. To alleviate the lack of appropriate training in gifted and talented practices, CAG has established its own Professional Development program which at this time is unfortunately utilized by only the best-informed schools districts of Fairfield County, but we are making an effort to expand our reach to the underserved communities where professional learning in these pedagogies is perhaps the most urgent.

CAG supports all seven recommendations presented to you by our colleague Dr. E. Jean Gubbins from UConn's Department of Educational Psychology at the NEAG School of Education, **and would additionally recommend that:**

As is the case in many other states, ALL Connecticut educators (K-12) are encouraged to complete gifted-endorsement coursework focusing on learning across the curriculum and incorporating higher-level thinking and problem solving skills. This can be done in-house through the district, the Regional Educational Service Centers, or university.

By passing the Proposed Bill 5911, you will ensure a more effective and meaningful implementation of the PL12-116 Education Reform Law, and significantly benefit the teaching and learning of ALL students in Connecticut schools, including the gifted and talented.